

Note: The following document was provided to the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force at their meeting on 10-23-12. The document excerpts the preface and a portion of the appendix of a paper that provides a brief introduction to the concept of jobs-housing ratios and what ratios may be appropriate for transit station areas.

JOBS-HOUSING RATIOS: NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND REGIONAL AND LOCAL BENCHMARKS



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PREFACE

Since the early 1990s, Fairfax County planning policy has emphasized the need for mixed-use development in activity centers and transit station areas, with housing as a significant component. However, there is no specific guidance on jobs-housing ratios. This paper addresses the concept through a review of the national literature. It then discusses regional and local benchmarks for jobs-housing ratios in transit-oriented developments in the metropolitan Washington area. This paper is intended to provide guidance as to what jobs-housing ratios may be appropriate for transit station areas and other mixed use centers in the county.

In 2003, the American Planning Association published a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) report entitled *Jobs-Housing Balance*. The report describes the concept as “a planning tool that local governments can use to achieve a roughly equal number of jobs and housing units (or households) in a jurisdiction.” The academic studies reviewed in the report found that acceptable ranges of jobs-housing ratios were between 1.3:1 to 1.7:1 (Weitz, p. 4). Such ratios are appropriate for large geographic areas, such as the region or an entire county. Since the late 1990s, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) has advocated a jobs-housing goal for the region of 1.6 jobs per household. Fairfax County has consistently achieved this regional goal.

For successful mixed-use centers at transit station areas in the region, the jobs-housing ratio is significantly higher than 1.6:1. This is because such centers are rich in jobs, with office and other employment uses concentrated close to transit. COG data shows that four of these centers – Rosslyn, Ballston, Bethesda and Silver Spring – have jobs-housing ratios between 3.4 and 6.0 in 2005. Two of the centers, Bethesda and Silver Spring, are projected to reduce their ratios to 3.3 and 3.0 by the year 2040, while Rosslyn and Ballston’s ratios are projected to be 5.6 and 3.5, or roughly the same.

Fairfax County has emerging mixed-use centers such as Tysons Corner and Merrifield/Dunn Loring. In 2005 their jobs-housing ratios were between 11.3 and 12.4. However, these ratios are projected to decline by 2040, to 5.5 (Merrifield) and 8.6 (Tysons). When residential buildout occurs, their jobs-housing ratios are expected to be 5.0 (Merrifield) and 4.1 (Tysons).

Based on the experience in the Washington region, future transit station areas and other mixed-use centers should generally be planned for a jobs-housing ratio between 3.0 and 6.0. Centers with jobs-housing ratios significantly above 6.0 are not true mixed-use centers, but rather employment or business centers. Examples of employment centers in the D.C. metropolitan area are included in Appendix A. Centers with jobs-

housing ratios significantly below 3.0 are not true mixed-use centers either, but rather urban residential neighborhoods.

Balancing residential and nonresidential development in transit station areas and mixed-use centers will result in higher levels of both daytime and nighttime activity and more vibrant places. Improving the jobs-housing balance can create economic and social opportunities by providing a mix of residential, office, retail, cultural and recreational uses. Further, mixed-use centers with jobs located close to housing are places where people may be able to walk, bicycle or take transit, reducing traffic congestion. Finally, improving the jobs-housing ratios in the county and the region should result in a sustainable pattern of land development for the long-term future.

This report includes five appendices. Appendix A contains COG data on the jobs-housing ratios in 46 centers in the Washington region. Appendix B covers planning history in Fairfax County between 1970 and the present. Appendix C discusses alternatives to the jobs-housing ratio. Appendix D covers the causes of jobs-housing imbalance, and Appendix E discusses solutions to jobs-housing imbalance.

APPENDIX A
JOBS/HOUSING RATIOS IN REGIONAL ACTIVITY
CENTERS, ROUND 8.0 COOPERATIVE FORECAST

Mixed-Use Centers

<i>Center Name</i>	<i>2005 Ratio</i>	<i>2040 Ratio</i>
Eisenhower Avenue	8.7	6.0
Downtown Alexandria	4.0	3.1
Ballston/Virginia Square	3.4	3.5
Clarendon/Court House	2.8	2.6
Crystal City	4.3	4.0
Pentagon City	3.1	2.7
Rosslyn	6.0	5.6
Friendship Heights	2.5	2.6
Baileys Crossroads/Skyline	3.9	3.6
Bethesda CBD	5.6	3.3
Silver Spring CBD	5.6	3.0
White Flint	14.9	3.3
Twinbrook	18.1	3.9
<i>Average</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>3.5</i>

Employment Centers

<i>Center Name</i>	<i>2005 Ratio</i>	<i>2040 Ratio</i>
The Pentagon	n/a	n/a
Herndon	5.8	6.0
Merrifield/Dunn Loring	11.3	5.5
Reston East	n/a	5.4
Reston West	16.7	4.8
Tysons Corner	12.4	8.6
National Institutes of Health	92.9	115.3
Rock Spring Park	56.2	17.6
<i>Average</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>7.8</i>

APPENDIX A (Continued)

Suburban Employment Centers

<i>Center Name</i>	<i>2005 Ratio</i>	<i>2040 Ratio</i>
Beauregard Street	1.1	1.5
Waldorf Commercial	18.1	14.4
Beltway South	40.1	15.1
Dulles Corner	3.3	2.7
Dulles East	22.4	6.9
Dulles West	54.5	34.0
Fairfax Center	3.4	3.2
I-95 Corridor/Engineer Proving Ground	418.3	603.8
Springfield	10.0	7.6
City of Fairfax-GMU	3.9	4.0
MD 85/355 Evergreen Point	4.7	3.0
Downtown Leesburg	2.7	3.3
Corporate Dulles	71.7	20.1
Germantown	5.7	4.2
North Frederick Avenue	4.9	3.8
Rockville Town Center	3.7	3.1
Shady Grove/King Farm/Life Sciences	9.5	5.8
White Oak	1.5	3.7
US 1 Green Line	6.1	3.7
Greenbelt	6.4	5.2
New Carrollton	19.1	7.3
Route 1	3.9	3.6
Konterra	727.5	18.1
Potomac Mills	91.2	3.2
<i>Average</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>4.8</i>

Source: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Spring 2012.